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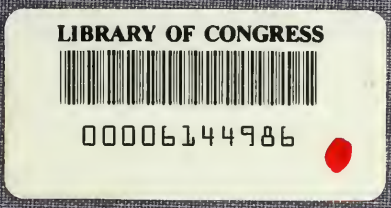

NATIONAL THANKSGIVING:

A SERMON,

PREACHED IN THE

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF CRANBURY,

NEW JERSEY,

ON NOVEMBER 26, 1863.

BY

JOSEPH G. SYMMES,

PASTOR OF THE CHURCH.

PHILADELPHIA:
WILLIAM S. & ALFRED MARTIEN,
606 Chestnut Street.
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Cranbury, *November 27th*, 1863.

Rev. and Dear Pastor:

Having heard, with much pleasure, a National Thanksgiving Sermon from you, on the 26th inst., and desiring that those who heard and those who did not hear, may alike be benefitted by reading the same, we request a manuscript for publication.

Yours ever and truly,

RICHARD McDOWELL,
PETER JOHNSON DEY,
JOHN J. APPLEGATE,
DERRICK G. PERRINE,
MATTHIAS M. PERRINE,
HENRY H. STULTS,
NELSON L. FORMAN,
STEPHEN T. DUNCAN,

Elders.

To the Rev. J. G. Symmes.

Cranbury, *December 1st*, 1863.

To the Session of the First Church.

Dear Brethren:

The Sermon was prepared with a desire to benefit the people of this community; and if they judge that it would be profitable to have it in a more permanent form, I am hardly at liberty to refuse. And especially so, since the sentiments uttered are such as I am glad to have go upon record. I have taken the liberty to make only such changes as will more clearly express my meaning.

Very truly your Friend and Pastor,

JOSEPH G. SYMMES.

SERMON.

PSALM CXLV. 7.

"They shall abundantly utter the memory of thy great goodness, and shall sing of thy righteousness."

I WELCOME you all into the courts of the Lord's house to-day, with peculiar satisfaction, to respond to the President's call to thanksgiving. The seasons have now yielded their increase; the blessings of health have been largely enjoyed; the quiet of our homes has not been disturbed by the hand of violence; the sanctuary has been open to all, and the priceless blessings of the gospel have been within the reach of all; and it is meet that we should appear before the Lord with praise. A more appropriate season could not be suggested, and no exercise more delightful could call us together.

No officer has authority to appoint such a day as this; much less, power to enforce its observance. But custom and the fitness of things have assigned the pleasing duty of naming such a day to the highest civil officer. And hitherto this duty has been performed by the Governors of various States, until "Thanksgiving" had approached the character of a national day. It needed only the call of the highest officer of the land to make it national. And so both propriety, and the growth of custom, indicated that it was time for the President to appoint such a

day. He is the highest officer in the land; the legally appointed, and therefore divinely constituted, head of the nation. And therefore we hail his call to praise and prayer with the highest satisfaction. We hail it because we recognise in it a significant indication of the fact, now growing grandly and broadly distinct, that we are a nation. We hail it with greater joy, because it completes our national recognition of Divine Providence. The Presidents have frequently called to humiliation and prayer, and to special thanksgiving; but this general annual call was still needed, and never before had been given by the nation's head. May it never again be omitted.

And now, because this call of the President marks an epoch, at least in the moral history of our country, and also because of the transcendent importance of passing events, I think it is peculiarly appropriate that our attention should to-day be directed to the goodness and righteousness of our God, as manifested in his dealings with our country. In his preservation of this land for ages from the knowledge of the civilized world; in his preparation of a chosen seed from all the nations of Europe, with which to make this wilderness "blossom as the rose;" in his care over our fathers through their years of minority, through their struggles in the formation of a Constitution, which, though not perfect, has never been surpassed by man, and through their establishment and administration of a government unequalled in the blessings it secures; and in the fearful visitations of drought, war, and pestilence; in all this we have seen displayed and mingled the goodness and

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righteousness of the Lord. His dealings with a nation must always be in accordance with righteousness; his goodness must always have some relation to their deserts; because nations are not immortal as such, and cannot be judged hereafter. In the present condition of our nation it becometh us to acknowledge the righteous hand of God, chastening us for our sins; but we must not forget also to acknowledge his goodness, never more wonderfully displayed than in this time of trial. If we do this, then our children, and our children's children, will have greater reason than we, "abundantly to utter the memory of his great goodness, and to sing of his righteousness."

But before proceeding with what I desire to say, let me anticipate, and answer, an objection that may arise in some minds before I am through. Some may say, this is *political preaching;* and the objection is, *ministers have no right to preach on political subjects.* I am very well aware that the phrase *political preaching* is a very vague and indefinite one. Each man may attach his own meaning to it, and condemn or commend accordingly. And I am also well aware that ministers sometimes make great mistakes on this subject, and preach in such a way as both to damage the cause they would advocate, and injure their influence in promoting religion. But their imprudence should not be made an argument to silence all others. I claim for ministers, and for myself among them, the right to preach on any subject that interests men in this world, or for the world to come. And that right could easily be maintained, on the broadest and firmest foundations.

It is not in accordance with my purpose to discuss those foundations now. Let me only say, that in exercising this right the extent, manner, time, and place must be determined by each man. Of course it ought to be exercised with prudence and common sense. But without these qualities no man is qualified to preach the gospel at all. But my whole soul revolts against the doctrine that there are subjects upon which ministers and the church have no right to speak. This is one of the most specious fallacies of the great adversary of souls; and nothing could please wicked men better.

Notice where the doctrine would carry us. Designing men may make the question of temperance; or, of the Bible in common schools; or, of the observance of the Sabbath; political questions, and then demand that ministers shall not break silence. These questions have already been carried into the political arena in some parts of the country, and any others may be carried there at any day. And must we, therefore, not follow them? The only rule that can be admitted is that which permits ministers to follow any question of which the Bible treats, wherever it may be carried. And certainly the Bible has much to say of politics, in the broad and general sense of that word. Not, indeed, in the way of bestowing upon ministers and the Church the control of rulers and people, but the right to teach both their duty. And I need scarcely add, that prudence will deter ministers from meddling with partisan strife and attempting to control the local machinery of political parties. But if one of them does, in this respect, transcend the

bounds of prudence and propriety, let us neither denounce the whole class, nor lay down absurd rules to govern the whole class. And withal let us be consistent, for it is very suggestive to observe that many who bitterly denounce political preaching in their opponents, have no word of denunciation for those ministers of a powerful Church, who actually instruct their followers how to vote.

It will be readily understood that the special application of these remarks is to the great rebellion that has so rent our country. And in reference to that subject, I hold that not only is it the right of a minister to speak out plainly, but he who is silent is recreant to his duty, both towards God and man. It is not necessary to indulge in bitter denunciations of other men. The cause of truth does not demand this, and is never promoted by it. The enemies of truth may do this, and we have it in abundance from rebels and their friends. But I venture to assert that those men who will not allow ministers to break silence on this great contest, and those ministers who bitterly denounce such as do speak, are alike sympathizers with rebellion and enemies of their government. And on their part consistency and fairness only require that they should go to their own place.

Now, I have no fear that you do not understand my position in reference to this great rebellion. I should be ashamed of myself, if I thought it was not understood. But there is one subject, intimately connected with it, about which you do not understand my position. And, as I conscientiously believe that it would be sinful to be silent in this period of

our country's history, I hope you will bear with me in a few words on this subject. I accord to every man the right to his own opinion, and I do not denounce those who conscientiously differ with me. But, I ask from them the same respectful attention I would accord to them.

No doubt you all understand me now as referring to the subject of *slavery*. I have never been what I call an abolitionist, though I am not afraid of that name. It is a much-abused term, signifying very different things with different classes; and may, or may not, be disgraceful according to the meaning you give the term. I mean by it to describe those who thought the citizens of one State had the right to abolish slavery in another. I could never hold that opinion. With many others, I thought that the citizens of the slave States should be left to manage that subject for themselves. Possibly, we were wrong in thinking and acting thus, and it may be God is punishing us for that conduct. At all events, that is the reason for my saying so little heretofore. And I can ask you, then, to listen to me as to one who has never been an extremist, and who would not dictate to others.

Early opinion in our country was almost, if not quite, unanimous in regarding slavery as an evil. All our first and prominent statesmen assented to this opinion, and those also who were themselves slaveholders. Washington, and Patrick Henry, and Jefferson, and Madison, and all that class of men were among them. Washington greatly desired to see the system gradually abolished. Patrick Henry said, "It is a debt we owe to the purity of our reli-

gion, to show that it is at war with the law that warrants slavery." Jefferson said in reference to this subject, "I tremble for my country, when I remember that God is just." And these men all had a hand in that famous ordinance of 1787, that consecrated the whole vast territory of the Northwest to freedom.

But not only was this the opinion of statesmen, it was also that of the Church. Our own branch of the Church of Christ has always been conservative, perhaps too much so of late years; but we would have her remain always conservative of whatever is good and true. Yet this Church, as late as 1818, made a strong deliverance on this subject.* These are

* For the sake of those who may not have other access to it, I have deemed it proper to insert this document entire.

"The General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church, having taken into consideration the subject of slavery, think proper to make known their sentiments upon it to the churches and people under their care.

"(*a*) We consider the voluntary enslaving of one portion of the human race by another, as a gross violation of the most precious and sacred rights of human nature; as utterly inconsistent with the law of God, which requires us to love our neighbor as ourselves, and as totally irreconcilable with the spirit and principles of the gospel of Christ, which enjoins that 'all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them.' Slavery creates a paradox in the moral system; it exhibits rational, accountable, and immortal beings in such circumstances as scarcely to leave them the power of moral action. It exhibits them as dependent on the will of others, whether they shall receive religious instruction; whether they shall know and worship the true God; whether they shall enjoy the ordinances of the gospel; whether they shall perform the duties and cherish the endearments of husbands and wives, parents and children, neighbors and friends; whether they shall preserve their chastity and purity, or regard the dictates of justice and humanity. Such are some of the consequences of slavery—consequences not imaginary, but which connect themselves with its very existence. The evils to which the slave is always exposed often take place in fact, and in their very worst degree and form; and where all of them do not take place, as we rejoice to say in many instances, through the influence of the principles of humanity and religion on the mind of masters, they do not—still, the slave is deprived of his natural right, degraded as a human being, and exposed to the danger of

some of the opening words: "We consider the voluntary enslaving of one portion of the human race by another, as a gross violation of the most pre-

a master who may inflict upon him all the hardships and injuries which inhumanity and avarice may suggest.

"From this view of the consequences resulting from the practice into which Christian people have most inconsistently fallen, of enslaving a portion of their brethren of mankind—for 'God hath made of one blood all nations of men to dwell on the face of the earth'—it is manifestly the duty of all Christians who enjoy the light of the present day, when the inconsistency of slavery, both with the dictates of humanity and religion, has been demonstrated, and is generally seen and acknowledged, to use their honest, earnest, and unwearied endeavors to correct the errors of former times, and as speedily as possible to efface this blot on our holy religion, and to obtain the complete abolition of slavery throughout Christendom, and if possible, throughout the world.

"(*b*) We rejoice that the Church to which we belong commenced as early as any other in this country, the good work of endeavoring to put an end to slavery, and that in the same work many of its members have ever since been, and now are, among the most active, vigorous, and efficient laborers. We do, indeed, tenderly sympathize with those portions of our Church and our country where the evil of slavery has been entailed upon them; where a great, and the most virtuous part of the community abhor slavery, and wish its extermination as sincerely as any others—but where the number of slaves, their ignorance, and their vicious habits generally, render an immediate and universal emancipation inconsistent alike with the safety and happiness of the master and the slave. With those who are thus circumstanced, we repeat, that we tenderly sympathize. At the same time, we earnestly exhort them to continue, and, if possible, to increase their exertions to effect a total abolition of slavery. We exhort them to suffer no greater delay to take place in this most interesting concern, than a regard to the public welfare truly and indispensably demands.

"(*c*) As our country has inflicted a most grievous injury upon the unhappy Africans, by bringing them into slavery, we cannot indeed urge that we should add a second injury to the first, by emancipating them in such a manner as they will be likely to destroy themselves or others. But we do think that our country ought to be governed in this matter by no other consideration than an honest and impartial regard to the happiness of the injured party, uninfluenced by the expense or inconvenience which such a regard may involve. We, therefore, warn all who belong to our denomination of Christians, against unduly extending this plea of necessity; against making it a cover for the love and practice of slavery, or a pretence for not using efforts that are lawful and practicable, to extinguish this evil. And we, at the same time, exhort others to forbear harsh censures, and uncharitable reflections on their brethren, who unhappily live among slaves whom they cannot immediately set free; but who, at the same time, are really using all their influence, and all their endeavors, to bring them into a state of freedom, as soon as a door for it

cious rights of human nature, and as utterly inconsistent with the law of God. And it is manifestly the duty of all Christians to use their honest, earnest,

can be safely opened. Having thus expressed our views of slavery, and of the duty indispensably incumbent on all Christians to labor for its complete extinction, we proceed to recommend, and we do it with all the earnestness and solemnity which this momentous subject demands, a particular attention to the following points.

"(*d*) We recommend to all our people to patronize and encourage the Society lately formed, for colonizing in Africa, the land of their ancestors, the free people of color in our country. We hope that much good may result from the plans and efforts of this Society. And while we exceedingly rejoice to have witnessed its origin and organization among the holders of slaves, as giving an unequivocal pledge of their desires to deliver themselves and their country from the calamity of slavery, we hope that those portions of the American Union, whose inhabitants are by a gracious providence more favorably circumstanced, will cordially, and liberally, and earnestly co-operate with their brethren, in bringing about the great end contemplated.

"(*e*) We recommend to all the members of our religious denomination, not only to permit, but to facilitate and encourage the instruction of their slaves in the principles and duties of the Christian religion; by granting them liberty to attend on the preaching of the gospel, when they have opportunity; by favoring the instruction of them in the Sabbath school, wherever those schools can be formed; and by giving them all other proper advantages for acquiring the knowledge of their duty both to God and to man. We are perfectly satisfied, that it is incumbent on all Christians to communicate religious instruction to those who are under their authority, so that the doing of this in the case before us, so far from operating, as some have apprehended that it might, as an incitement to insubordination and insurrection, would, on the contrary, operate as the most powerful means for the prevention of these evils.

"(*f*) We enjoin it on all church sessions and Presbyteries, under the care of this Assembly, to discountenance, and as far as possible to prevent all cruelty, of whatever kind, in the treatment of slaves; especially the cruelty of separating husband and wife, parents and children, and that which consists in selling slaves to those who will either themselves deprive these unhappy people of the blessings of the gospel, or who will transport them to places where the gospel is not proclaimed, or where it is forbidden to slaves to attend upon its institutions. And if it shall ever happen that a Christian professor in our communion shall sell a slave who is also in communion and good standing with our Church, contrary to his or her will and inclination, it ought immediately to claim the particular attention of the proper Church judicature; and unless there be such peculiar circumstances attending the case as can but seldom happen, it ought to be followed without delay, by a suspension of the offender from all the privileges of the Church, till he repent, and make all the reparation in his power to the injured party."

and unwearied endeavors to correct the errors of former times, and as speedily as possible to efface this blot on our holy religion, and to obtain the complete abolition of slavery throughout Christendom, and, if possible, throughout the world."

And observe, this paper was drawn up by a committee, of which Dr. Baxter, of Virginia, was a member; and it received the *unanimous* vote of the General Assembly. According to this definition, you may call me an abolionist. But to this extent every member of the General Assembly of 1818, from the South as well as from the North, was also an abolitionist. In view of such facts as these, it would seem preposterous to inquire where a change of opinion has taken place on this subject. Certainly not in the North, unless it may be said that we have not firmly held that high position to which we have just referred. We have reason to thank God that our Church has continued to abide by the deliverance of 1818, although there has been some wavering. In a distinct utterance the Assembly of last spring re-affirmed that first deliverance. And we may rejoice to belong to a Church holding such sentiments. But in the Southern States a great change rapidly took place. No doubt many held, and still hold, the old opinion. But the large majority came to regard and defend slavery as a divine institution. And not only that, but they soon refused to tolerate any other opinion. It became as much as a man's life was worth, in the slave States, to question the divine right of slavery. But they were not content with this, they were determined the system should be strengthened and extended. In church

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and state they were determined to crush out all opposition. Politicians must bow to their demands, or be overwhelmed. Churchmen must defend their favourite institution, or, at least, apologize for it, or they could never reach any position of honour and influence in the Church.

And in all this South Carolina has ever been foremost. In 1860 the Synod of that State took action encouraging the State to secede, and declaring the Assembly's action on slavery of 1818, "virtually rescinded" by the subsequent action of 1845. And then in 1861, although the Minutes of that Synod had not been before the Assembly for five years, and although not one member was present from that Synod, yet the Book of Minutes was forwarded by express, in order that the action above stated might be approved. But the Assembly condemned the action, and thereupon the Synod of South Carolina withdrew from connection with our Assembly. And that pestilent member of our Union has thus obtained the infamous distinction of being the first to rend the State, and first to disrupt the Church; and all for the aggrandizement of slavery.

The intolerant, propagandizing spirit of slavery was making itself felt all over our land. The evidence of this was seen in the fact that it had become a very delicate matter to touch that subject. People were uneasy, and ready to find fault at the mere mention of it. And this certainly indicated that it was high time to speak out boldly and fully. Whatever is intolerant of free discussion has something wrong about it. Slavery will not, because it cannot, tolerate free discussion. Truth seeks discussion;

falsehood perishes by it, and the inference in reference to slavery is obvious.

Now I do not propose to occupy your time in discussing the *moral* question involved in slavery. I am ready to adopt the strong language of Dr. Breckinridge, of Kentucky, "Out upon such folly! The man who cannot see that involuntary domestic slavery, as it exists among us, is founded upon the principle of taking by force that which is another's, has simply no moral sense." That is, slavery is founded upon the principle of the highway robber; and no man with moral sense can defend such a principle. But all men have moral sense—an innate sense of right and wrong. And all men know that slavery is wrong. They may apologize for it; they may defend it as right; they may solemnly declare their belief in its divine origin; but in their inmost souls they know it is wrong; their conscience contradicts all their declarations. To assert the contrary, is to confess to a want of conscience. The system that delivers over one man entirely into the hands of another, without any means of defence or redress, is in palpable violation of the plainest dictates of simple justice, and of the teachings of the Christian religion.

But although I will not waste your time in discussing this question, permit me to notice one or two difficulties that may exist in some minds. Some one may say, "the children of Israel were permitted to hold slaves, and Paul returned Onesimus to his master, Philemon." I admit this is all true. But one man concludes, "if that is true, I will have nothing more to do with the Bible." Another con-

cludes, "if that is true, then the enslaving of Africans among us is right." Both conclusions are wrong. The first, because it makes man wiser than God. The second, because it rests upon a fallacy. The Jewish slavery no more justifies that which exists among us, than the extermination of the Canaanites would justify us in exterminating other nations. Both were justifiable in them, because of express divine permission and command. And as regards the slavery of New Testament times, Christ and his apostles contented themselves with inculcating principles that must inevitably remove it, wherever they are received and practised. This was then, and it will always be, the result everywhere. There never was a more absurd farce than is furnished by the attempt to justify slavery and our fugitive-slave law, by the case of Paul and Philemon. Justify them by other means if you can; but do not attempt it by such a reference. Paul returned Onesimus as a Christian brother, and not as the slave and chattel of Philemon.

But the true and only point in the argument drawn from the Bible is, does it justify the system existing among us—not some theoretical system, but what we have seen in our own land? I need not discuss that question. Every unbiassed person must answer, No!—in no way that it can be applied. Then that argument ought to be abandoned. But yet we have had long discussions as to what was the system among the Jews and Romans; and as to whether it was possible for the relation of master and slave to exist without sin. And all this, while the friends of slavery have gone on, strengthening the power of a

system which permitted wicked men, for the sake of gain, to separate husband and wife, and parents and children; to herd human beings together like droves of cattle; and to traffic in the souls and bodies of immortal beings like merchandise. I have no kind of doubt, that men have sustained the relation of master to slave without sin, and do so to this day. But such cases do not define the system, they are the exceptions under it. They do not even prove that the evils lie not in the system, but in its abuses. The system itself is the greatest of all abuses. Not that all slaves are in the condition above described, but they are put entirely at the mercy of depraved men, and every slave is liable every day to fall into that condition. Nothing could be a greater abuse, nothing could do more violence to human nature than such a system.

But another will say, "*If you destroy slavery, you will elevate the black race to an equality with the white.*" I have two answers to that objection; one is, it is an entirely selfish objection. In natural rights all men are equal before God, for he has "made them all of one blood." In the positions we occupy in this world the true basis of equality is merit. But this is constantly violated. The shrewd rascal is permitted to occupy a standing and position which is denied to the honest poor man. No one can gainsay the following doctrine; all that can be asked, or granted, is that every man shall have an equally fair chance with others to make the most of himself and do the best he can. The man who denies that doctrine, both does his fellow-creature a wrong, and is a coward.

The second answer to this objection is, that it is based upon a fallacy, or rather upon two fallacies. One is this, "Social equality follows from giving freedom to the slaves." The truth is, one is not involved in the other at all. Designing, corrupt politicians, may endeavor to make the people believe this; but they do not believe their own teachings. The other fallacy underlying this objection is this, "Because the black race is inferior to the white, it is right to keep them in slavery." If this were a correct principle, we might claim slaves from other races than the African.

There is another objection sometimes made, "*If the slaves are all set free they will overrun us.*" This is another selfish difficulty. But it is met by a selfish consideration—if they are all set free, they will remain where they are. The natural position of that race is towards the equator. The exodus will eventually be southward, not northward. But if slavery continues to exist, then multitudes will be driven northward. They are distinguished for local attachments, and nothing but the stern hand of slavery at home, and the hope of liberty in the distance, will ever make them wander far from their homes. But let us silence that selfishness that claims an exclusive right to any particular portion of the earth's surface; and let us remember Pharaoh. God sent unto him saying, "Let my people go." Pharaoh might have answered, "If I let them go, they will perish in the wilderness, or there will be no place found for them." But God made a way where man could not, and found a place, and took care of his people. Now, if God has said to us, "Let this people go," our duty is obedience. God

will take care of the consequences. He will provide a way and a place. If we refuse obedience, a Red Sea disaster will overtake us, but God's purpose will be accomplished. We have but barely escaped such a disaster, and it behooveth us to listen carefully for the voice of God.

Let me, then, hasten on to glance at the indications of the Providential design in this great war. I read that design written in letters of living light; *it is to destroy slavery.* There are many other sins, besides that of slavery, for which we may say God is punishing us. But this was, doubtless, the *great sin* of this nation in our relations to men; and we were all guilty, therefore we must all suffer. I say it was *God's* design to destroy slavery, it was not *man's.* Under our Constitution we could not touch slavery in the States. And certainly there were few who desired to do so. Whether it was right or wrong in us, very few of us desired to interfere with the system where it existed. Then if it was God's design to remove it, there were but two ways by which it could be done—by the people of the slave States themselves, or by violence. It was very evident that the people would never have removed the evil. The design, then, could be accomplished only by violence. But whence shall that violence arise? Must the North arise to invade the South to destroy the system? They never would have done that; and it would not have been right if they had. But thus it came;—slavery and freedom could not continue to exist together in this country. One or the other must control the policy of the government. And whichever did that, must finally prevail over the

other. It is not necessary, for my purpose, to stop to prove that in the end—in the gradual and natural working of principles and policies—these States united must have become all slave or all free. It is enough now to say that slaveholders themselves saw this clearly; and, although they denounced the idea when in power, they prepared to act accordingly. So their resolution was fixed, that when they lost control of the government they would destroy it. Freedom had submitted to the fundamental principle of a republic—the majority shall rule—for fifty years, while slavery controlled the policy of the government; but now, when it gained only the partial control, slavery will not submit.

Now it must be admitted that if there is any element in our national existence that will not submit to the majority, then in that condition republican government is impossible. And that element must be removed or national life is inevitably destroyed. But not only did slavery refuse to submit to the majority, but it arose to destroy the national life. For our national life existed in a union under one administrative head, and whatever struck at that head struck at the nation's life. We simply sprang to arms to save the government, and restore its rightful authority. And it cannot, with truth, be said, either to our credit or our reproach, that we *intended* to destroy slavery. But we went forth to accomplish one object, and in doing that, God used us to accomplish another. And thus would we prefer it should be, that he shall use us to fulfil all his own counsel. It was neither right in us, nor were we disposed, to strike the blow of our own motion. But God overruled the folly and madness of men to

place slavery in such an attitude, that all the interests of humanity compelled us to strike the blow under which it must die. The violence, then, by which slavery is to be destroyed is of its own seeking. We were ready to compromise with slavery on almost any terms to secure its loyalty to the government. But it would have no compromise if freedom controlled the policy of the government. It must rule or it will ruin. So much for the beginning of the war.

Now mark the hand of God in its progress, indicating his great design. We thought seventy-five thousand men an immense host; and marched forth confident of an easy victory. But we were stupefied and amazed by a panic and a rout at Bull Run. It can scarcely be doubted that if Beauregard's army had been thus routed the war would have ended then; and ended in such a way as to leave the old question of slavery just where it was before. But observe how men acted and felt; traitors in our own service undoubtedly procured our defeat on that battle-field. Rebels and their friends rejoiced in their victory; and the multitude of the loyal thought, "all this is against us." Some saw the hand of God even then, and recognised the meaning of this reverse. All can see now that the victory of the rebels there, was a calamity only to themselves; it was a victory for slavery that will cost its life.

But this was not enough. The next year we gathered up a magnificent host, and marched against the rebel capital. And according to all rules of human calculation our success was certain. History will reveal the causes of failure, we cannot know

them now. But this we know, God was against us, and left us of that army only remnants sufficient to save ourselves from being overrun. But if McClellan had captured Richmond, it seems probable the war would have ended then, and ended in leaving slavery where it was before. Again a rebel victory was turned to a great, perhaps the greatest, rebel disaster. The war, still continued, had now advanced to such a point as made the destruction of slavery inevitable. Since that time it has not mattered how the war terminated, as to its result on this system; if the rebellion is crushed, slavery goes down with it; if it succeeds, slavery is no less sure to die. History will show, in a most wonderful manner, how rebel successes and loyal reverses were just such, and so far, as was necessary to accomplish this Providential design. This is the light by which I have always read all our reverses.

Then came the Proclamation of Emancipation. I leave it to other men to criticise its effects and expediency at the time. I have two remarks to make concerning it: one is, it was nothing more than a recognition of the Providential design with reference to slavery. It may have hastened the final destruction of that system, it did not render it more certain. It certainly presented a fair issue, and will, hereafter, furnish the ground upon which men and parties will take their position, for or against this great enemy of our national life. Another remark is: however men may explain the fact, it is still a fact, that nearly all our substantial successes at home have been achieved since that time. And certainly our relations with foreign governments have rapidly become more satis-

factory. So that now we can have scarcely the slightest apprehension of difficulty from abroad.

Now look at another indication of the Providential design. We were alarmed at the idea of four millions of slaves becoming free. The appalling question oppressed us, "What will become of them?" It seemed impossible to free them, and more impossible to provide for them a place. But God has found a way to freedom for them, in a manner almost equalling the wonders of Egypt, and already he is showing his manner of providing for them. As our armies have advanced, these people have fled for liberty, and sought their protection. And wherever territory has been permanently occupied, they have been afforded the opportunity to labor. And thousands of these freedmen are laboring in their old places and occupations, with a will and satisfaction they never knew before. As our armies continue to advance, this process will go on. These people will stay where they are, to do a work none can do so well, and they will do it better with freedom than in slavery. Doubtless multitudes will perish in passing through their transition state. This is always true in every upheaval of society, and the more sudden and violent the transition, the more will perish. We would have chosen it to be gradual, but God has chosen otherwise. And all we can do is, casting behind us our old prejudices for our own favorite methods, accommodate ourselves to passing events, and hasten to the present relief, and the final education and elevation of those whom God has made free. And in this work of elevation he is leading the way. For I am here called to record, what once I did not believe could occur, that this

oppressed race is, in a most wonderful manner, fighting its way to the rights of manhood. We were very loath to give them the opportunity to do this, but necessity compelled us. And, like a rising tide, this necessity is sweeping all opposition before it. And we Anglo-Saxons, who claim to be preëminently a fighting race, will be constrained to do what all brave men are ever ready to do—acknowledge bravery in others, and accord to bravery its merited reward.

Let me refer to one other indication of the great Providential design. Ever since this war began, we have paid great deference to the people of the border slave States that did not go with the rebellion; and properly enough too. But now we are all astonished, perhaps some are astounded, to find these people going far ahead of us all. In Virginia, we have the western portion of the State, always loyal, in the Union as a free State. In Delaware, Maryland and Missouri, the people have already voted that slavery shall die; and the only question is whether it shall die instantaneously or gradually. In Kentucky, the question has not reached that point; but it will, very soon. And in the States already reclaimed by our arms, how stands the matter? In Tennessee, Arkansas, Mississippi, Louisiana, Florida and North Carolina, the people are discussing whether they shall abandon slavery, and return to their places in the Union. For they seem to have accepted it as the only alternative, that they must do the first in order to do the latter. Slavery is already swept out of Virginia, the State that went with the rebellion in order to become slave-producer for the Confederacy. And we know that many of

the people, in the States yet under rebel rule, are ready to follow their brethren back into the Union without slavery.

Then the people of the free States have just expressed their solemn determination, that the war shall be prosecuted until the authority of the government is established over every foot of our territory, whatever may become of local institutions. I refer not now merely to the result of elections, but to all other indications of sentiment, as well. The mass of our people, of all parties, are united in this determination. The leaders that opposed this resolve are buried in oblivion. Politicians may talk as they please, I have the greatest faith that the people will decide aright, when they fairly understand a subject; and there never has been any substantial difference among *the people* on the point above named. I consider this development of anti-slavery sentiment among the people of the Border States, and the continued unity of the people of the free States in this one resolve, as among the most wonderful manifestations of Providential design which the history of the world presents. Here, then, are two elements, operating to secure the accomplishment of God's design to destroy slavery. There is a third element, which makes the problem complete;—the stubborn persistence of the leaders in the rebellion. Their successes at first only stimulated their hopes, until the war had reached a point from which they could not return. They and their darling institution are irretrievably committed to succeed or perish. They dashed slavery against the government, in a manner, and with an energy, that must destroy or be destroyed. The loyal people only said, "In the strength

and by the grace of God, *you shall not destroy.*" Their madness at first, and their persistence at last, made the other alternative sure. And we may thank God to-day that he has overruled the madness of its friends to the destruction of this monstrous evil.

Now, if these things are true, what is our duty? Here we have little else to do than stand still, and see the wonderful works of God. Still there is somewhat that we may do. We may do whatever we can to help our brethren in the slave States, who are striving to get rid of this burden, to bear the burden until they can throw it off. I am willing to share the burden so far as to grant compensation to loyal slaveholders, if such can be found. And this further we can do, and we must do; the freed slaves, in multitudes, are suffering untold horrors. It is not their fault for which they are suffering. We must do what we can to mitigate those sufferings, until they can settle down in homes of their own, where they can earn their own livelihood. Still this more we can do, we can resolve never to lend our voice or vote to permit slavery ever again to urge any claim *as a right.* Like a felon, it has no rights. The only thing that can be granted, after all the agony it has caused, is a little time in which to disappear altogether. It is my solemn conviction that whoever interposes, in any way, to save slavery, will find himself fighting against God. This is true of men or parties; and none can do this without being overwhelmed. If this is truth, let us act accordingly. Regard not what I say, except I speak according to truth. Be not afraid of the truth; it

will not hurt you, unless you oppose it. If you do that, it will crush you.

And here I might well pause, for I have detained you long enough; but I cannot restrain the desire to suggest a few more thoughts from the vast field presented. For I consider this such an occasion as rarely comes to men; and such as I do not expect to enjoy again. I have referred to the grand Providential design in this war; doubtless God has many designs to accomplish, but *the grand design* is to destroy slavery. And I have presented the indications both of the existence and the accomplishment of that design, as forming a great subject for thanksgiving on this national day. In the progress of its accomplishment God has strangely mingled goodness and righteousness. But his works of righteousness were only such as were necessary to prepare the way for his goodness. Some may think it too soon to give thanks on this subject. I have waited and watched, and to me it seems not too soon.

But permit me now to remark further, that we have reason "abundantly to utter the memory of the great goodness and righteousness" of God towards this nation, *in teaching us such a lesson, in the cause of law and order, as can never be forgotten.*

The Spirit of God, as I firmly believe, has inspired the people of this nation—the great majority of them—with the doctrine, that the only way to deal with forcible resistance to law is to crush it. That is the true doctrine with reference to *any* rebellion; but especially so, if against a mild and beneficent government. This is the greatest crime men can commit. And then, at all hazards and at every cost,

the law—the government—must be sustained, until traitors and rebels unconditionally submit. There is no safety either to life or property in any other doctrine. Now if this great rebellion is crushed by the strong arm of power, as I have not the slightest doubt it will be, there will, in all probability, never be seen its like again. With slavery removed, it would seem impossible that there should ever again be cause for such another. But if such a cause should arise, the fearful fate now overtaking those in rebellion will stand as such a warning to those who would resist the ordinance of God, as will make men hesitate long, before plunging into another such undertaking. God is enforcing the teachings of his word in reference to civil government in a manner not to be forgotten. "For the ruler is not a terror to good works, but to the evil. For he is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil." Rom. xiii. 3, 4. Surely that wrath will not lightly be provoked again.

But not only in the results of the great rebellion itself will this lesson be learned. We have had outbursts of the foul spirit of rebellion in our midst. In one of our great cities lawless violence instituted a reign of terror for days. In some parts of our land the mob have fired churches, and danced around the ruins, because those who worshipped in them were Protestants, and loyal to their government. A dangerous dalliance was attempted by some. But slowly moving justice is pursuing them to the fearful extremity. It may be said by some, this is the work

of our most degraded foreign population, and therefore they should be prevented from coming to our country. But nay!—let them come, as now they are flocking to our shores "as doves to their windows." Only let them be taught that, although this is a land of liberty, it is so only because it is a land of law and order; and it is a land where all men shall be protected in worshipping God according to the dictates of their own conscience.

There is another subject for hearty thanksgiving which we should do wrong to omit noticing. I may call it *the advanced position taken by our rulers on the subject of religious truth.* Hitherto our public documents were too generally such as heathen or infidels could approve. There has been a marked advance in this respect. This is seen in the frequent calls of our present Chief Magistrate to acknowledge God, first in humiliation and prayer, and then in thanksgiving. And especially in the character of these calls; confessing sin, and praying for its pardon; acknowledging the just chastening of the Almighty, and seeking its removal; and chiefly in recognising, as had never been done before, the Personality of the Third Person of the Trinity.

And then we have, last of all, the loyal and excellent call of our Governor, echoing the President's call to thanksgiving. Besides calling us to give thanks for life, and health, and abundant harvests, and for victories by our armies, he also calls upon us to acknowledge that all our blessings *come from the mercy of God.* This is a confession statesmen are not likely to make. But that which deserves particular notice is, that he calls upon us to give thanks

"especially for the gift of the Son of God, the Saviour of the world, who continually maketh intercession for us." This is enough to make the Christian's heart bound with joy. I doubt if ever there was such a recognition of the Son of God in any public document of the country. And this indicates one great sin—the greatest sin of our land in relation to God—we have not properly recognised Jesus Christ. Upon his shoulders is laid the Government. His Providence it is that rules the nations, and his grace and power saves sinners. As sinners will perish who refuse to believe on him, so nations that refuse to acknowledge his authority shall be "dashed in pieces like a potter's vessel." I do not know what may have been in the mind of the Governor when he penned these words, whether he thought of Jesus Christ as making intercession for a people, or for individuals. We generally use that expression as referring to the individuals for whom Christ intercedes. But this is the grand thought I would have you recognise in this connection; Jesus Christ maketh intercession for this nation as such. It is my firm conviction that God has a great mission for this nation to perform; a mission only just begun; a mission not only to break the prison doors of bigotry, tyranny, and oppression, and disseminate the principles of civil liberty throughout the world; but also a special mission in behalf of the kingdom of his dear Son.

The teeming millions that are swarming to our land, and covering our hills and valleys with such unparalleled rapidity, come to us to receive a pure gospel. Our own safety demands that we give them

this gospel, and that speedily; otherwise we shall be overwhelmed. Their temporal and eternal salvation demands this. The highest interests of humanity demand it; for these millions, coming to us from every region under the sun, must send back a powerful influence to their fatherland. But besides this silent, indirect operation, we are sending the living messengers to all nations, carrying the Bible, with all its priceless blessings of civil and religious liberty. And we are only beginning this work. Never was so grand a mission, on such a scale of grandeur, committed to any nation. For the fulfilment of this mission God is purifying us by fire. To save us for the fulfilment of this mission the Son of God has been interceding for us; and for this he maketh continual intercession. This glorious thought calls not to presumption, but to humility and holy exultation. He intercedes for us, not for our own sakes, and therefore we should be humble. He intercedes for us for the sake of his own kingdom, and therefore we may exult in the assurance of success. This thought has sustained our faith in the darkest hour; and will sustain it to the end. In the firm conviction that Christ intercedes for us, we have the basis of the fullest assurance that our country shall triumph over all enemies, and go onward and upward in her career of blessing.

This leads to the mention of the principal reason we have for believing that Christ still intercedes for us, and it is a conclusive one; it is that *God hath not taken from us his Holy Spirit.* This is a subject for most devout thanksgiving to-day. With what gratitude do we remember the years of revival, from

the presence of the Most High, that preceded the breaking out of the war! Who would have predicted that those years were to be followed by the years of this desolating war? But now it must be an ungrateful heart, and a blinded mind, that cannot perceive and will not recognise that those years were to prepare us for these. God often has prepared his chosen people for fiery trials by a large outpouring of his Spirit. So by that wonderful revival that swept over our land, we were prepared to do and endure, to suffer and to die, in this tremendous struggle. Our widows and orphans were taught beforehand to stay themselves on God. Multitudes of our noble soldiers and sailors were made ready to lay down their lives, fighting for the grandest earthly inheritance ever bestowed upon man; and their souls were fitted to pass away to the better inheritance in heaven; and the people of God were qualified to enter upon those wonderful fields of Christian effort and benevolence opened up in our armies and navies. But more than this, we were not only thus prepared to pass through this struggle, but it is evident that God was then specially preparing his church for that great work to which we shall be called after the close of the war. I hope soon to take occasion to set before you this work. I can only at present say, that what is already opening up among the freed people of colour, and in the wide regions desolated by war, presents perhaps the most urgent and promising field for Christian exertion ever offered to the church.

But the impression with some may be that God has, at present, withdrawn his Spirit. Some may be

lamenting that the revival has passed away. On the contrary, we are called upon to give thanks that God has not withdrawn his Spirit. History will show, I believe, or at least the records of eternity will reveal, that even during this terrible war there has been experienced more of the work of the Spirit, in consecrating Christians to the service of Christ, and in converting sinners, than in any previous period of our country's history. This influence has been sent down, as dew is distilled upon the grass, upon all classes and conditions, and upon all parts of our country. However much a military life may appear detrimental to morals yet our army and navy have shared largely in this blessed influence. And this is true also of the armies of the rebellion. This fact might, to some, seem to argue as favorably for the cause of our enemies as for our own. It is rather indicative of the unity of work and destiny which God has designed for this great people. And especially is this so, if considered in connection with the different effects produced by the Spirit's presence upon the minds of our people. In us it is producing greater calmness and patience, but more unswerving firmness and unity in prosecuting our great work to the end. Among our enemies the effect is the opposite, but just such as tends to the same consummation. Multitudes, who have fallen into our hands, have declared that their hearts were not in their cause, and have confessed the sin they have been either compelled or deceived to commit, in fighting against their government. And we have to-day good reason for believing that the majority of the people are convinced of the great mistake they have

made, and are ready to return on terms of unconditional submission to lawful authority. But two things now prevent their return, the power of their leaders, and the action of that pitiful faction among ourselves which encourages them to hope for other terms of return. Other terms cannot be granted, for they are the terms by which we ourselves abide, and which are absolutely necessary to stable government.

But notice the effect of the Spirit's presence upon the rebel leaders; it is just what might be expected it would be upon wicked and abandoned men; "evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived." 2 Tim. iii. 13. The more hopeless their schemes become, the more desperate they grow, resolving, in the last resort, to drag every thing with them down into a common ruin. Like the spirits of darkness, becoming convinced that their doom is unalterably fixed, they are determined to involve in it as many as possible. Their desperation manifests itself in oppressing the deceived victims of their crimes to the very verge of human endurance; and in exhibiting towards unhappy prisoners in their hands a barbarity scarcely paralleled in the annals of savage warfare. But their madness is only making more certain and terrible their own destruction. Many of the best among them have already been removed from the coming evil day, and that "destruction that cometh suddenly and without remedy" is near to overtaking the guilty ones that remain; and it cannot now be long delayed or eluded. And whether they perish under the sentence of the government they have tried to destroy,

or fall into the hands of an enraged, deceived people, or wander as exiles over the earth, their doom is one that will serve as a warning for all time.

When their power is swept away, we must hasten to their crushed victims with supplies in one hand and the word of life in the other. Already their imploring cry is reaching our ears; that cry we may not disregard. Let the loyal North, never so prosperous in the history of the country, be ready to pour down a stream of supplies from their treasures. If the rebel armies hold together through the winter, the sufferings of the people under their domination must be fearful, and we must stand ready with relief, as opportunity offers. The philanthropist and Christian must follow in the wake of our victorious armies; their work must precede that of restoring the regular operation of the government over the rebellious States. Their work flies to the needy of every class and condition, and stops not for forms or policies. The work of restoring the sway of the Constitution, the influence of the national laws, and the operation of the courts, is a difficult and delicate work, and may require much time. But let all this be done, by our government and our people, not in the spirit that requires abject submission to masters, but in that spirit of justice that would compel all our people to submit to the same laws that we obey, and the same government, formed by a common effort, and that spirit of benevolence that would have "our nation's foes return and be brethren of one family, with the same Bible, the same religion, the same Church, the same liberty, and the same social equality."

This accomplished, what a wonderful country we shall have! Lying within the temperate zone, but stretching from the Tropic of Cancer away towards the Artic Circle. Traversed by a river from the frozen regions of the north to the southern gulf; and by a national railway from the Atlantic to the shores of the Pacific. Embracing the advantages of almost every clime. Its soil capable of producing nearly every product of earth. Filled with mines of coal, and of all the useful and precious metals, the hoarded sources of exhaustless wealth for ages to come. Furnishing facilities for the manufacture of every article needed by man. Offering an asylum for the oppressed of all nations. Affording a field for the employment of every kind of industry, thus developing, to the fullest extent, all the energies of men. Inhabited by a homogeneous people, living under one flag, one Constitution, and one administrative power, and united together in fulfilling one high, Providential mission; and enjoying the protection of a free government, that has endured its severest test, in its most terrible form of civil war.

What a magnificent inheritance to leave to our children! Well may we suffer and endure any burden to secure it for them. Two years ago I presented reasons for our faith that God had not cast off this nation, but that he intended to save us. Now it is almost time to give thanks that he has saved us. Certainly we may give thanks for the many wonderful things he has done for us. The end of our long agony seems near at hand; and when we contemplate the inheritance it has purchased, we cannot find it in our hearts to regret the agony.

The cost has not been too much, nor the sacrifice too great. The treasures of wealth and blood have not been lost. Those that have suffered most in mind, body, or estate, will deserve most, and must hold the highest place in a grateful country's regard. The full fruition of all our hopes may not be enjoyed in this generation; but in the fullest confidence, and with entire satisfaction, we will stand in our lot, that our children may peaceably enjoy this inheritance. They will rise to call us blessed, and to give thanks to God for what we have suffered and accomplished. And then, too, will they fervently thank God that in the year 1861, Abraham Lincoln became President of the United States. We may not be able to unite in this thanksgiving now. It cannot be expected that we should; for honest men will differ in opinion and action. Washington had his honest opposers, as well as bitter revilers. But no man now living is willing to acknowledge that his grandfather was one of either class. So our grandchildren will be ashamed to confess their descent from the revilers of this plain, honest man. Springing from the bosom of the people, he came to his high position in a time of unparalleled difficulty. But he has so conducted himself that his bitterest revilers can say nothing against his character; and his honest opponents must concede his honesty and patriotism. Raised up of God to accomplish a work of incalculable and long-enduring benefit to this people, he must, and may, wait for history to do him full justice. Then the descendants alike of friends and foes will regard his accession to power as the beginning of a new

epoch in the history of this nation; and his term of office, as the terrible throes of the nation passing through its second birth, thence to enter upon a renovated life of growth, and expansion, and power, and blessing, such as the world has never seen.

But amidst all the tremendous events that are passing before us—events that mark the rise and fall of empires—we are passing away. How many of those we love have passed away since these great scenes began! Upon each such occasion as this we miss some loved face, we listen in vain for some well known voice. They have passed away into the land of silence, and we listen for their voice until the silence becomes a solitude that seems to crush our spirits. But one by one we are rapidly following them to that silent land. A few more days or years, and we too shall be missed. "The places that know us will know us no more;" our places will be filled by others, and our work taken up by others. The grand concern of life, then, is to make our peace with God, and so be prepared for another world. Transcendently important as are the passing events in their influence upon this world, they are as nothing to us, individually, when compared with the importance of an interest in that "kingdom which is an everlasting kingdom." Becoming identified with that kingdom, we become possessors of all things, and heirs to "an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and unfading." And although that inheritance is only one of promise, and although our earthly inheritance is bright and beautiful, yet "the Canaan of promise is better than the Mount Seir of possession." We give thanks to God for unnum-

bered temporal blessings, but for the richer gifts of grace through Jesus Christ his Son, we would call upon "our souls, and all that is within us," to bless and magnify the name of the Lord. "Committing the keeping of our souls unto him," in all the vicissitudes of time, "as unto a faithful Creator," we will not fail "abundantly to utter the memory of his great goodness, and sing of his righteousness," until we unite to recount his wondrous works of mercy with the redeemed of every age and kindred, who shall be gathered in "his presence, where there is fulness of joy, and at his right hand, where there are pleasures for evermore."

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